

DO-IT-YOURSELF MOVES

Grafenwoehr Law Center—Servicemembers making permanent changes of station (PCS) or undertaking consecutive overseas tours (COT) within Europe often consider moving their belongings under the Army do-it-yourself (DITY) move program. Instead of personal property being packed, transported, and delivered by a commercial carrier, the servicemember does all the work himself. The government may pay the soldier up to 95% of what would be the government's cost to make the move. The big drawback of do-it-yourself moves, apart from all the heavy lifting? The Army claims system will usually not re-imburse servicemembers for loss or damage suffered in the course of such moves.

If you decide to make a do-it-yourself move, prepare an inventory of everything you pack and note the condition of each item, including any pre-existing damage. List separately every item for which you paid \$100.00 or more. Include all big-ticket items—television, VCR, stereo, computer, and the like—on the inventory. Count your compact discs, computer games, and videotapes, and list the quantity of each. List every carton on the inventory and the general contents of each carton. It's a good idea to have a superior in your chain of command verify your inventory and sign off on it.

Be careful how you pack, because any breakage or damage will normally be presumed to have resulted from improper packing. Unlike ordinary moves, the Army claims system will pay for breakage or damage on a do-it-yourself move only when caused by a traffic accident that was not your fault, or if your car, truck, or trailer is broken into while en route to your new duty station. It is therefore imperative to report any traffic accident or incident of theft to the proper authorities as soon as possible to document that the incident occurred as alleged.

And don't take a vacation along the way: a loss that occurs in the course of a significant deviation from the direct route to your destination would not be compensable by the Army. For instance, if you are PCSing from Vilseck to Stuttgart and were to stop off in Munich for a couple of nights along the way, the Army would not pay you for items stolen from your car or rental truck. Finally, as always, review your insurance policy and purchase additional coverage as needed before you make a do-it-yourself move.

If you suffer loss or damage to property that may be compensable by the Army, contact your local claims office promptly. In Grafenwoehr, call Grafenwoehr Law Center, DSN 475-8428/civilian (09641) 838 428; at Hohenfels, call Hohenfels Law Center, DSN 466-2401/civilian (09472) 832 401; for Vilseck, call Vilseck Law Center, DSN 476-2240/civilian (09662) 832 240.